

EDGAR J. BEIGEL

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: I wonder if you could tell me a little about your background. Where did you come from and what was your education.

BEIGEL: Before I got into the State Department?

Q: Oh, absolutely.

BEIGEL: Well, I came out of Pittsburgh, PA and went into the army for almost four years.

Q: Did you go to college before hand?

BEIGEL: I had already finished; got an AB in political science at the University of Pittsburgh. After demobilization I went to a newly established School of International Affairs at Columbia University, under the GI Bill. That was actually a two-year course, which I wouldn't advise, for which you get a Master of International Affairs. I might add that all of my army experience was in the States until very near the end of the war in Europe. I was then a German order of battle specialist in the Military Intelligence Service-they said you certainly want to get to Europe, don't you. This was at Camp Ritchie, their training center in Maryland.

Q: What was Camp Ritchie?

BEIGEL: That was the military intelligence training center operated by G-2 of the Army. I said I was very anxious to go. So they sent me out as a German OB replacement and I edited the ship's paper on the way, on a large liner filled up with infantry replacements. I was reading the tickers the ship's radio was giving me all the time. I read about the last two weeks of the war in Europe. We arrived in La Havre on May 8, VE Day. So, I arrived the day the shooting stopped in Europe, went to the MIS headquarters outside of Paris, and ended up going as cadre to the Biarritz American University, if you can believe that. I was part of the I and E program of the Army.

Q: I and E?

BEIGEL: The Information Education part of the US Army decided to set up "university centers" in England and at Biarritz. This was designed to bring over mostly University of Maryland faculty members on army contracts who would teach in three-month cycles. There were quotas for all the units around Europe which would send personnel who had not had university training. I was part of the cadre of that organization for about six months. I came home in early 1946, and spent two years at Columbia. At the end of that time I published an extracurricular paper on the Monnet Plan.

Q: Will you explain what the Monnet Plan was?

BEIGEL: The Monnet Plan was devised at the beginning of 1946, headed by Jean Monnet who gave his name to it, to break the bottlenecks in the French economy in five or six critical sectors, determine what they were and devise ways of breaking them; to survey the French economy, to measure where it was in 1945 as compared with 1929; and to try to project for four or five years. I was interested not in the economics of this but in the political science of it. Was there planning in France before the war? What did it amount to? What happened during the war? What was the Monnet Plan all about? The French Information Service was very good in New York then and had a large office in Rockefeller Center and an extensive library of French documentation. So I wrote about the organization of all this and ended up having it published in the Political Science Quarterly, which is sort of a house organ at Columbia.

I showed reprints of that in the State Department when I came down in the summer of 1948, and the division chief in what was then the Division of Economic Development in the E area, said, "That's the kind of thing we are doing in this division." They hired me.

Q: Had you pointed yourself towards the State Department?



BEIGEL: Well, I had a notion about that. In any case, I had once taken the Foreign Service exam when I was still in the army in 1945, and actually took the oral. As I had passed the written exam they said, "You didn't really pass the oral, but you can come back in a year and take the oral again without having to take the written again." But I didn't go back as I was at Columbia. So I went into the civil service, in the E area.

Q: E being the economic area at State Department.

BEIGEL: Yes, it is now called EB.

For about a year or two I served in the Western European section of this division, which was organized on a global basis. The Marshall Plan had been invented in 1948 and we were very much involved in global allocations: how to cut up the pie, dividing appropriations among the European participants in the Marshall Plan. I developed a close relationship with the political desks in the Western European Division and in 1950 there was a Department reorganization and part of the E area moved into the geographic area. I moved over and joined the Bureau of European Affairs.

Q: I would like to move back to the 1948-50 period. In allocating the pie to the various countries, how was it done and what was the interrelationships? Did some countries have better presenters than others?

BEIGEL: I think we were smart about how to do this. We told the Europeans that they must form an organization, the predecessor of what is now the OECD in Paris, because we were advocating European cooperation leading up to "unification." Paul Hoffman, the Director of Economic Cooperation, ECA, which administered the Marshall Plan, gave many speeches on European unity. We said to them; you have this organization, tell us what your needs are. Great studies were made projecting for four years what they anticipated their overall balance of payments deficit would be. Each country tried to develop its own development plan.

The French, of course, were in the forefront having already invented the Monnet Plan. It was very simple in the French case in administering funds. In any case to divide up the pot of dollars which went for balance of payments assistance, the Europeans were told, "We are going in for a \$5 billion appropriation for the coming year. We would like your recommendations of how that should be divided among you in terms of your respective national balance of payments projections." They did that. They came in with the recommended division of the pot. Then the question was of adjusting these numbers depending upon what we knew about the programs of each country.



A small country in western Europe, Portugal as an example: the Portuguese at that time under Dr. Salazar's leadership weren't really looking for anything. Very unusual. But we had a special military relationship, this was before NATO. We had, from the war, air and naval facilities in the Azores and we had a special feeling about the relationship with Portugal. The then Director of Western European Affairs suggested that when I went to meetings of all the country officers I advocate a small amount for Portugal, naming a figure, and that was readily accepted. This was very marginal in terms of the whole pot.

But a country like Spain, for example, Spain was in the diplomatic doghouse then...

Q: Absolutely, under Franco...

BEIGEL: There had been a UN Resolution, we had withdrawn chiefs of mission and for a while when I was still in France in the winter of 1945 to 1946, down at Biarritz close to the frontier, the French closed their frontier. This was when Mr. Blum had come back in as Prime Minister, Socialist leader...

Q: Leon Blum.

BEIGEL: Leon Blum. He was Prime Minister briefly after the war as well as during the famous period in the 1930s. In any case, the Spaniards remained in the doghouse. Mr. Truman was elected in his own right in 1948 after having served as president after Roosevelt died. About the time of the 1948 elections, about the time I was cleared and went on the payroll in the State Department, it became apparent to me that Mr. Truman had strong feelings about Franco Spain (there was a strong Baptist influence on Truman and Baptists were not very well treated by the Spanish church and government).

Q: And the church, of course, in the Franco period was very, we are talking about the Catholic church, very strong and very conservative.

BEIGEL: Oh yes. This was the consequence of the Spanish Civil War...a fascinating subject.

One of the first papers of the Policy Planning Staff, that George Kennan then headed, was policy towards Spain. He very wisely said: current policy is absurd and, if anything, counter-productive; we should normalize relations with Spain; if we are looking for liberalization in Spain, political and economic, we are not going to get it with the present policy. That paper went up and became one of the first PPS papers approved by the NSC.



By 1949, the Joint Chiefs of Staff got the notion that they could use some new military facilities in that part of the world: bomber bases, both in French Morocco and in Spain, to give them maximum flexibility. The Navy, which always had a Mediterranean squadron, could use some fuel and ammunition storage facilities on the Spanish coast, as well as a repair facility which we now have outside of Cadiz.

Then the process began of approaching Franco. Of course, we restored our ambassador. Stanton Griffis, who was a Wall Street type and in the movie business, went over as ambassador, and was then followed by career people. We made a military survey and by 1951-2 were negotiating for the facilities. And that was completed in 1953. I was on the margin of that, very much involved in the Spanish dossier. I was involved in getting the Spaniards into the Ex-Im bank circuit and in deciding how to handle aid appropriations that Congress was making unilaterally. There was a special Spanish lobby in the Congress and the President was confronted with appropriations for Spain that he didn't ask for and didn't want to have. They were set aside pending this negotiation so that when it all came together, in 1953, the funds that we already had in hand were part of the quid pro quo, so to speak.

Q: Could you explain a little about what the Spanish lobby in Congress would be at that time?

BEIGEL: Perhaps the leader of the lobby was Senator McCarran of Nevada. There was a very special reason for his intense interest in Spain. There are a lot of sheep in Nevada and the tradition was that there were Basque shepherders and special immigration quotas, etc.

Q: I recall as a visa officer that we were always on the lookout for Basque shepherders.

BEIGEL: Right. And that combined with, I suppose, his church; I don't know what church he belonged to, but in any case it was the Catholic element...

Q: How about Cardinal Spellman, was he...?



BEIGEL: Yes. He would be a silent partner in all this. But there was a feeling that isolating Spain was pointless; this was a hangover from the New Deal; this was Mrs. Roosevelt's influence, it was believed, because she was still a member of our UN delegations during the Truman period. And then Truman's own feelings, which he didn't have any inhibitions about expressing at press conferences. There was a residue from the thirties; Franco was leaning towards the Germans until 1942 when we landed in North Africa, and then he saw the light, that things may be going to change, and he became more cooperative, as did Salazar when we wanted to use facilities in the Azores. I think we really latched on those facilities perhaps after we landed in Sicily. In other words, Salazar could see the handwriting appearing on the wall. We wanted to ferry bombers out to the Far East, for example, to bomb Japan, through the Azores.

Q: Rather than that circuitous route we had been using before down to Brazil and over through Africa...

BEIGEL: Yes, to cut it short.

So we had an Azores agreement; then we got the Spanish agreement in 1953. I was simultaneously getting heavily involved in the French dossier on the war in Indochina. Even though there had been what was called the pentilateral agreement on Indochina signed when Acheson was Secretary during the Truman period, and a small trickle of assistance, a part of the Republican campaign in 1952, mostly reaction to the whole Korean episode, was that the Democratic Administration had failed to pay adequate attention to the Far East. To symbolize this Dulles said we should pay more attention to Indochina. We were at that time continuing to give balance of payments assistance to the French.

Q: I just want to put this in line with work. About when had you switch over?

BEIGEL: I never had switched.

Q: The Eisenhower Administration came in 1953.



BEIGEL: Yes, the beginning of 1953. I was in EUR working on France, Spain and Portugal, mostly economic work on those countries, sitting with the desk officers. Then I became more involved with the military side, on the French side, beginning in 1950, because the NATO program started. The NATO treaty was signed in 1949. The big appropriation to build up European armies came after the Korean War began. I always sensed that there was a fear at the top here, in the White House, that something mischievous was going to happen in Europe. There was a great impulse that was shared with the Congress to build up the NATO forces, so that there was a massive 1950 appropriation. At the same time there was an impetus from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the rest of the government that we needed to mobilize more manpower in Europe for the NATO armies. We must mobilize West German manpower. That was anathema to the French. Acheson had to confront the French and British because there was that group of the three Western Foreign Ministers which was a residue from the war. He met with them and pressed to bring in German manpower. We had been secretly stockpiling equipment on our own-unilaterally-out of the appropriations to build up NATO forces. There was a famous stockpile for the potential German army if and when it was formed and that was when the French invented the European Defense Community proposal which after two years of negotiation failed.

Q: Let me ask a bit, because I want to bring you back...

BEIGEL: I was getting on to the Indochina part. In 1953 it was decided that what we should do in the case of France is change the way we attribute the local currency that accrued to the recipient government from Marshall Plan balance of payments assistance. In the beginning part of this aid was on a loan basis, but for the three or four years thereafter the aid was mostly grants to the recipient governments who sold the dollars to their importers and the local currency that the importers paid into the central bank became a resource for each national budget. The US had a say in how they would spend that. With some governments there were great debates on what their national economic program was.

In the French case it was more or less cut and dried because the French had the Monnet plan calling for investments in critical sectors, and proposed to attribute the counterparts funds to these programs. Then Dulles said that what we really want to do now is to attribute these funds to the French military budget for their Expeditionary Force in Indochina and in addition, to their support of the three national armies in Indochina.

Q: The three national armies being the Cambodian, Laos and the Vietnam.



BEIGEL: Which the French always called *suppletifs* to their own forces. They always had natives in support of their army. But the idea was to create national armies because we were promoting nationhood for those countries. The French gave support to the creation of national armies but they had their own interests, cultural and economic, in those states since they gained control of them in the 19th century. And of course they had been overwhelmed there by the invading Japanese forces. This was true throughout southeast Asia, British and French, the white man had lost face. Ho Chi Minh emerged at the end of the war with Japan and there is the famous history of all that. And then insurgency started. There was what I call the first Indochina war from 1945. By 1953 it was necessary to find out from the French the detail of the military budgets for French forces and for the national armies. There wasn't anyone in the US Government who had a clue. I went to Paris and collected this information and focused attention on that.

Q: How did you get this information and how cooperative were the French?

BEIGEL: I first began to get the information through telex exchanges from the code room in the State Department in the old building on the 5th floor in those days. One could write a message to Paris and hand it in at the code room where it would be transmitted and shown on a screen in a small room off the code room. Paris received it through a military circuit through Frankfurt and, I imagine they had a similar screen in their code room. The people I was talking to, the Economic Minister, the head of the ECA mission, the financial specialist, were sitting in a room receiving this questionnaire. They would go around to the French and hand in the questionnaire. The French were very cooperative. They had a special Ministry for the Associated States which had a defense element in it that was backstopping the French Expeditionary Force in Indochina. I eventually went over and spent a week interrogating the French colonels dealing with this budget. I guess they were fascinated that this pipsqueak American could come over and ask them questions about their budget and argue with them, etc. The purpose was to find out where the water was in the budget and squeeze it. At the outset, however, that was not true. The first year it was simply a matter of attribution, but when it came around for the second year a great review exercise took place. I spent five weeks in Paris helping collect information early in 1954.



By then the Defense Department had a comptroller for the European theater who had his headquarters a block away from the embassy in Paris. I had an office with the comptroller's staff and in effect advised them on how to move things. This was considered a priority project for the NSC. And we collected this information and wrote a thick report. It came back and was submitted to the NSC with a covering political explanation and justification written by a superb member of the Policy Planning Staff who was a great Far Eastern specialist-Charlie Stelle, I believe it was. That was submitted to the NSC as a proposal from the Secretary of State who was very much concerned about getting it approved within the Administration. He didn't have any problems about the President. He had problems with George Humphrey, the Secretary of the Treasury who had a steely eye on all kinds of expenditures. In a certain sense, it may be fair to say, this presentation was designed to convince George Humphrey that we knew what we were doing.

The French had come to us in 1953, to our Embassy in Paris. Mr. Laniel, the Prime Minister, told the young American Ambassador, Mr. Dillon, "I'm taking a leaf out of Mr. Eisenhower's book. I'm trying to balance the French budget too. One of the things I am thinking of doing is dumping our \$300-400 million support (in francs) for the national armies of the three associated states." This is the real reason I spent the five weeks early in 1954 collecting detail on their own budget projections. They were in effect paying for and administering those national armies. The Laniel statement was found to be incredible back here. Did he really mean that? Did Dillon really understand him? The Secretary's counselor, Douglas MacArthur II, had been in the Embassy in Paris in 1939, and at Vichy before our invasion of North Africa. He had known Laniel as a member of parliament. Now Mr. Laniel was Prime Minister. It was decided to send Mr. MacArthur over to speak to him. He went and the telegrams came back saying yes, Mr. Dillon had heard it right to begin with. So then it was a question of really fleshing out the justification to cover the subsequent year's funding.

The French would pay out expenditures on their own forces and on these national armies and give us a voucher and we in effect reimbursed them for the voucher. This was the mechanics of transferring that assistance to the French. The first year of the combined program amounted to \$785 million overall.

Q: When Laniel was proposing this was he proposing getting out..

BEIGEL: It wasn't a withdrawal; he was in effect saying that the French Expeditionary Force is staying there but I am going to stop paying for the national armies, would you like to pick up the additional bill? We said yes.

Q: But in a way it sounds like if you don't pick up the bill we are ready in the long run to get out of here.



BEIGEL: That was the implication. And of course there was always the question of the sticking power of the French. But in 1953 they were sticking. In fact their Supreme Commander, General Navarre, had devised what was known as the Navarre Plan. The spring of 1954 came around and all of this material had all been approved for a second year and was submitted to the Congress. Mr. Dulles went up to testify. This was the spring of 1954. Great presentation of the Navarre Plan- -in two years they were going to mop up Viet Minh and bring peace to Indochina, etc. Well, of course, the battle of Dien Bien Phu began early in the spring of 1954 and was going on when Dulles went up to testify. Not too much time went by when we realized what was happening. First thing we knew in the summer of 1954 there was a Geneva Conference. That whole second-year presentation came to naught. However, we were very interested that the French Expeditionary Corps not just leave. When the country was divided at the 17th parallel we were anxious the French remain there so that the Viet Minh not take over the entire country. We offered special \$100 million program of support for the French.

In any case I had been heavily involved in writing a very elaborate procedural agreement in the summer of 1953 to transfer a very significant-and these were big numbers in those days-amount of aid to the French relating to the Indochina war. At the same time, my colleagues across the hall were completing negotiations of the first Spanish defense agreement.

Q: Your colleagues across the hall were...

BEIGEL: The Spanish Desk. Having gotten very much involved in the French military budget, from 1950 on, I became the resident expert on the French NATO program and particularly their budget and how it was related to what they were doing and what we wanted them to do and what our aid program would be, both on the military assistance side and the economic assistance side. And this went on for a number of years.

Q: I would like to cover this period now because part of this is a reconstruction and the focus on your role. You were in the civil service?

BEIGEL: I was in the civil service. I was asked then (1953-1954) to enter laterally under the Wriston Program "or else." The man who said "or else", Mr. Salzman, left. Loy Henderson became the Under Secretary for Administration. He let it be known that people would not go off the payroll if they did not enter laterally. I chose not to enter laterally. Instead I kept getting annual promotions in the civil service, in light of my activities, which were of great interest at higher levels in the Bureau, and the Department. So I became a kind of resident expert on the political-military and economic relationship with France. But I continued on the Spanish-Portuguese side. Mostly economic relationship on the Spanish- Portuguese side, chiefly military on the French side.



Q: Just to talk a little about the relations, how things were working in this period, you might say from the '48 through the mid-50s period. How were decisions arrived at, how were the bureaus constructed, how did things work, particularly with the civil service and foreign service and how did things go there?

BEIGEL: Well, in 1948 when I arrived in the Department you had the economic area which had functioned since the end of the war and was filled up with mostly civil servants, not all. There was what was apparently believed to be at the higher levels a dichotomy developing with the Foreign Service in the traditional bureaus and in a different building. The economic area consisted of several divisions in an old brick apartment house that the government acquired when it was built on the corner of C street and 21st Street. In fact there was a series of three apartment houses built there, all of which became government property and made into office buildings. I was in the corner office building. No air-conditioning. The War Department building that became the State Department building was air-conditioned which made a big difference. I was particularly pleased to have a close relationship with the political desks because in the summer I would spend hours in the new building and became well and favorably known to them. When the 1950 reorganization was put into play they were invited to ask for people by name if they had favorites they worked with and they wanted to see transferred into the geographic bureaus. I was on the list for the Office of Western European Affairs which was temporarily headed at that time by Douglas MacArthur II. But soon he went up to create a new office to backstop the NATO activity and Ted Achilles came on as director of the Western European Office. The Western European Office was changed from a division to an office during that reorganization. The former Office of European Affairs became the Bureau of European Affairs. Each bureau had its own assistant secretary; before there had been one assistant secretary covering all the geographical regions, believe it or not. Each area had its assistant secretary and had a deputy and soon it had two deputies: a deputy in EUR for Western Europe and another for Eastern Europe. I think there must be four or five deputies now which shows you how Parkinson's Law has worked in the State Department, along with the rest of the US Government.

In any case at that time, 1948, there was still this dichotomy; the important thing was to cooperate, but this was a matter of personalities. I had worked under an office director, Burt Knapp, who later went over to become President of the World Bank, who operated under Willard Thorp, the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. Over in EUR there came in at that time a man named George Perkins, head of a pharmaceutical empire, I believe, in New York, who was a good Democrat, but it turned out he was a good public servant; as a political appointee in a difficult position like the European Bureau he did very well. He was supported by deputies who were career, knowledgeable, highly experienced people. A deputy for Western Europe was Jamie Bonbright who had been in the Bureau, been in Paris, later went as mission chief to Lisbon, then to Stockholm before he retired.



WE when it became the office, I'm now moving up to 1950, had an office director. Ted Achilles was there when I went over and was then succeeded by Homer Byington who came back from Madrid. Then Johnny Jones came back from Madrid as office director. Bill Tyler was brought back from Paris to be the deputy director at that time. He was preceded by Ridgway Knight who came back from Paris. In other words a geographic office, including the desk levels below, was staffed by people who had served in the area abroad and great emphasis was given to that. They were people highly knowledgeable about the country. This is something that has been lost in the way the Department now operates. There was at one time, when Kissinger was Secretary, supposedly a rule to deliberately avoid such assignments. Supposedly Kissinger did not want to be second-guessed at some lower level...

Q: It was called the global outlook program, known as GLOP.

BEIGEL: Yes, GLOP. This was absurd. Even in the last five years since I have left I have watched to see how the European Bureau was staffed. I regret to say that the system that existed when I went in 40 years ago has disappeared. You have many people now working on countries who hardly know the language and know nothing about the country.

Q: Yes.

BEIGEL: I think the government suffers. In any case, in those days the desk officer and the officer director were very important in the scheme of things. The desk officer was supposed to be the fountain of knowledge. It was not all that unusual, although it wasn't a regular event, that Mr. Acheson would call up desk officers and ask questions.

Q: There was not as much layering for one thing.

BEIGEL: Well, there were those layers but at that time I suspect that somebody on the desk could tell the Secretary of State with self-confidence and with knowledge the answer to questions. There was once a most unusual occurrence. An assistant French desk officer got a call from the White House and it turned out to be John F. Kennedy on the line who wanted to know something about Algeria. This was when the Algerian war was going on-it was still French territory. For an event like that to take place indicates something of an attitude of the political leadership or the departmental leadership toward the lower levels and also the quality of the people who were down there.



In any case, I had no trouble at all in collecting information, for example, for the Indochina negotiation. This was a most unusual experience in my career as I hadn't been on the payroll that many years. When I would collect this information through the telex system I would then, that evening, type up a memorandum analyzing this material, drawing new questions to be raised at policy level and eventually with the French. Then I would use the old reproduction machines that we then had to run off copies of the memoranda and have them ready first thing in the morning for Ridgway Knight, the deputy director, who was the French specialist at the office level, for use in a meeting with the Deputy Assistant Secretary or the Assistant Secretary; Doc Matthews, who was then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs; Phil Bonsal, who was director for Southeast Asian Affairs; and Walter Robertson, his Assistant Secretary. At that level they would look at the data and questions and give them their approval. This was an instant clearance at the policy level of all the concerned bureaus, counselor's office and planning staff. Then WE had to go back and do further exploration with the French via the telex system. This I would say was a unique experience. You could not do it that way anymore.

Q: Let me ask you a question. Here you were dealing with our support and trying to keep the French going for the most part in Indochina. You represented Western Europe. Now this is all one of the great battles that comes up again in Algeria which I hope will come up later. Were you getting any opposition or strong questioning from say the Far East or at a policy level of "why don't we cut and run?" "what are we doing with this colonial business, or internally within Western Europe?" or were you a creature of the Western European...

BEIGEL: No, not at all. This was government policy of course. To resist this Communist movement, and don't forget the Communists had gained complete control of China in 1949 and this was all very traumatic to the Administration and certainly to a large part of Congress. Therefore there was no problem about supporting an effort to resist in Indochina. The French were doing that job, we would support the French. Now there was a desire that the French as part of their program would recognize that self-government was what the future would hold in Indochina and that Bao Dai, if he were to be the emperor, would become ruler of an autonomous area and not just part of the French Empire. But there was no debate in the US Government on all the basic premises. I was warmly supported by people like Phil Bonsal, who was director in the Southeast Asian office then. He was anxious for me to go out to Indochina which I would have done in the course of 1954 had Dien Bien Phu not put an end to a lot of things. Just go out to see the war. As far as doing the paper work that was never a problem since I didn't rotate out, they didn't have to worry about that.



There was an ex-colonel Hoy, Bob Hoey, who was the desk officer for the Indochina area. I think he had moved from the military; I don't know if he was in the civil service or Foreign Service. In any case this was never a problem. I might say in the 1950 reorganization a number of people who were civil servants came over and I guess eventually just disappeared through retirement; several went into the Foreign Service; but I went on and enjoyed what I was doing and was given promotions.

Q: Let me ask, as time went on, we are moving into the 50s, the Wriston Program came with the idea being to make everything more rotational and a way to get rid of, you might say, the resident experts but have people who served in the country. That was the idea.

BEIGEL: Right.

Q: Did you begin to feel more and more that you were the residual memory of Western Europe?

BEIGEL: Well, yes, in a way, that's right. I was able to remain because of my activities, really. I continued on and I was quite pleased and the people I was working for were pleased and it just went on. It went on from 1950 for 34 years after that.

Q: Well now, were their counterparts say for West Germany, for Italy, etc.?

BEIGEL: I can think of a counterpart in Eastern European affairs?

Q: Who's that?

BEIGEL: He left Eastern European affairs, went back to the E area and eventually emerged as an assistant secretary. It was Jules Katz. He was a kind of counterpart from that period. There was another person who was a civil servant who became the economic officer for Eastern Europe until he retired, who remained after Katz. I don't know where he was when Katz was there. I cannot off hand recall such arrangement in the other constituent offices of EUR.

Q: How about for Latin America?

BEIGEL: There were other such phenomena around the Department, but as time went by, either they left or retired...



Q: I was wondering was there ever an inner core group formed by those who were left to get together to discuss memories, etc.?

BEIGEL: Not at all. I was part of the WE operation. In the mid-60s, there was still a newer program in which Dean Rusk had the notion that office directors should be people equivalent to ambassadors, very senior officers. The WE director was traditionally a class-1 officer, I'm talking about the old system of grading, classification...

Q: I might point out that in those days a class 1 officer was the FSO-1 which was quite different from now. Now the class-1 officer is equivalent to a colonel. The old FSO-1 was about major-general or something.

BEIGEL: Well it is what is now two grades above class-1.

Q: It was at least a minister-counselor.

BEIGEL: Yes. That's right.

I came in as a P-3, that was a GS-9-that is what Ph.D.s would get in the government then. I started off well, and then went 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15. When the Rusk program came in the net effect of that was to create openings for senior officers called country directors. A country director would be a senior office and so would his alternate country director, which once upon a time was deputy director of office. The WE office was broken up. That's the way the positions were created for senior officers. Maybe 50 of them around the department. They took offices and broke them up into smaller entities. WE became three separate country directorates; each one with a country director. So that you could have instead of 2 senior positions for those nine countries which had once been covered by WE, you had 6 senior positions. That is the way you create positions to place senior officers in the Department.

I had to choose whether I would work on Spain and Portugal, which became its own country directorate, or stay with France and the Benelux which were put together with France. John Leddy was then assistant secretary. It was important to him that I continue doing France, because by that time we were leading up to be evicted from France by Charles de Gaulle.

Q: What period?



BEIGEL: This is now up to 1965-1966. It was necessary to negotiate an orderly withdrawal of our military presence from France which became a major activity, for a year or more, of instructing Ambassador Bohlen in Paris on what he should be raising with the French and getting, on an overnight basis, clearances out of the Pentagon for all this which was another unique experience and operation.

Q: I would like to talk about this. John Leddy in an interview with Willis Armstrong discusses your coming in with this handwritten note from General de Gaulle for the President. Do you recall this?

BEIGEL: Oh, yes, what happened was when de Gaulle, who gave us some hints and we also had sources inside the French government so that we realized that what was about to hit the fan. When it did hit the fan it took the form of a handwritten letter that General de Gaulle sent to the President. He sent one to Adenauer, and I guess he sent one to Harold Macmillan which he considered his three principal allies. I think the General had asked the Foreign Ministry to draft such a piece of correspondence and he got it in due course. He saw what they had to suggest but wrote his own note which became a collector's item. There we had a handwritten note, a rather old-fashion way of doing inter- governmental business at the head of government level. That may be the handwritten letter referred to.

Q: We can come back and do this another time. Can we now talk about the phenomena of de Gaulle and how we dealt with him through the Department?

BEIGEL: Well, when de Gaulle left office in 1946, crossed the political wilderness as the French called it, and stayed there, there was a Gaullist party which other parties considered threatening; they got a lot of votes in some elections in parliament; there was a question of whether we would keep in touch with de Gaulle through our ambassador or DCM in Paris. I think Dillon, for example, would see de Gaulle every once in a while, just to maintain contact. When the crunch came in Algeria on the 13th of May, 1958 the Fourth Republic had diverted most of its ground forces from France and Germany down to North Africa. We had been giving various forms of support to the French forces while at the same time people such as Jack Kennedy, US Senator, were speaking out very strongly about the need for self-government in Algeria. The government's problem was to behave in such a manner as to maintain a supportive relationship with France. When the crunch came, and the politicians of the Fourth Republic agreed that some very serious step had to be taken, General de Gaulle was invited by most of the parties and political leaders to come back to Paris and become Prime Minister. He met with all the political leaders and the only one who gave him a hard time was a man named Francois Mitterrand.



Q: The Socialist candidate...

BEIGEL: Well, Mitterrand wasn't exactly a Socialist, but he moved into the Socialist Party later on. He was one of the center parties then. Conservative party, if anything. In any case, de Gaulle comes into office in 1958 and the first thing that happens is that Foster Dulles knows that here is a formidable figure. Dulles knew his history and knew how difficult de Gaulle was among the allies during World War II. Eisenhower, of course, was in a fortunate position of having been the Allied Commander in Algiers and then in the invasion of France, so he had lots of relations with de Gaulle. He had a special advantage that during the World War II period he had always maintained a good relationship with de Gaulle. De Gaulle understood that Eisenhower was subject to direction by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and by the President of the United States, so that the US positions on whatever the subject was weren't invented by Eisenhower. They had a good relationship, in a personal sense. The first thing that happened was that Dulles went to Paris after de Gaulle was in office a month or two and talked to him about various things around the world. As I recall, without getting into the detail of this which is all very well known, he talked about nuclear submarine cooperation and de Gaulle said that he had agreed that the French should go on with their nuclear weapons program that had begun some years before he came back into power. While we wouldn't cooperate on the nuclear weapons program maybe something could be done about developing their nuclear submarines because we had already helped the British in that respect. That was all right with de Gaulle. He said they would be exploding their first nuclear test weapon sometime in 1960, his scientists had told him. We began a negotiation. I remember Dulles went back to see him at the end of 1958.

In the interval a very important event had taken place. We had landed forces in Lebanon in the summer of 1958 and the British had landed paratroop forces in Jordan. Also in 1958 there was in the Straits of Formosa a great to-do going on between the Chinese from Taiwan, who were implanted in the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu and the Chinese communists on the mainland. An artillery duel. We were anxious that the Chinese communists not invade Quemoy and Matsu and take them over, etc., etc. What later became known as brinkmanship was practiced. We made public statements to deter the Chinese. In the Lebanese operation I remember a French cruiser was sent out to the eastern Mediterranean and asked for some fuel from one of our oilers in the area. Our attitude can be generalized as, "please go away." We did not really want to associate France in this venture since the French had bad relationships with the Arabs in those days.

Q: Particularly the Lebanon-Syria relationship where they had been the mandated power.



BEIGEL: Well, and notwithstanding their historic interest in Lebanon going back to the Crusades. They had been the mandated country for Lebanon and Syria and they had fought with the British during World War II over that; they had given up the mandates, etc., etc. General de Gaulle by September 1958-who had been doing a slow burn I'm sure-formulated a letter to Eisenhower, it may have been typewritten this time, and an identical letter which he sent to Macmillan, saying that he was very disturbed by all of our unilateral behavior in the Far East and Lebanon. As you reflect on it: what if we had gotten into a war with Communist China which had then invoked its then existing alliance with the Soviet Union, then we had gotten into a tense situation with the Soviet Union and wanted in turn to invoke the North Atlantic Treaty. We could drag France into something that it had nothing to do with, etc., etc. So therefore he, General de Gaulle, was enclosing a little memorandum to suggest some new arrangements which amounted to having a council of the big three at the head of state level. They would meet to consider events all around the world. This was given its name by others, not de Gaulle as the Tripartite Directorate Proposal, which was not directed at NATO, it was global. (Later on, not at that time, de Gaulle made some speeches in France indicating among other things he wanted to have a say in the employment of nuclear weapons by the United States. Of course that had been something that the British Government had wanted and sort of got on a bilateral basis. That was an understandable interest of de Gaulle's.) This was something, of course, that the US Government couldn't deliver on. The US Government had mutual security treaties in a number of places-we had the Rio Treaty in the Western Hemisphere, we had several treaties in the Far East...

Q: We had SEATO and CENTO...

BEIGEL: So the answer Eisenhower gave was, well, General de Gaulle we have treaty relationships around the globe which you France do not have, and we are not elevating ourselves with several other self-selected governments above all these treaty partners, we are dealing with each set of treaty partners in its own right. Therefore we are very sorry we cannot accommodate you in that respect, but we will be very happy to have consultations with you. Dulles went back to Paris towards the end of 1958 and tried to consult with de Gaulle; we had elaborate talks at the ambassadorial level, but it all came to nothing in terms of what de Gaulle had been asking for. De Gaulle would periodically raise this with Eisenhower and he even raised it with Kennedy when he came into office. It finally petered out. One of the things that de Gaulle said at the end of his memorandum was: And by the way I will subordinate my future behavior in NATO to your giving me satisfaction on my proposal. At that time, no one knew quite what that meant.



We were conducting a negotiation with the French admirals who came over about nuclear submarines cooperation. Lo and behold we discover that General de Gaulle had announced that the French Mediterranean fleet, operating out of Toulon, which had been earmarked for wartime assignment to NATO command (just a paper transaction) he had withdrawn from that earmark. That was the first unraveling of French participation in NATO. Except this first unraveling only took the form of a statement; nothing happened in the real world.

Q: Well let me ask, this is the overall view, how were you and Western Europe looking at this and responding to it-the period from '58 up to about '65?

BEIGEL: We first learned about this from a press ticker. We used to have the French press ticker in WE- Agence France-Presse-for many years until it was discontinued. We learned about what was happening in France very quickly that way, it was a great advantage, but the price of paper made it impossible eventually. The first thing we had to do was alert the Assistant Secretary that this was what de Gaulle had just done. This was critically important because he was either on his way or on the Hill giving testimony to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy about this agreement we were going to enter into to assist the French in developing a nuclear submarine. One of the things you have to do in such circumstances is the President has to make a determination under the Atomic Energy Act that the recipient country is fully participating in a mutual security arrangement. If General de Gaulle is beginning to withdraw forces from their NATO earmark, he is no longer fully participating, particularly on the Navy side. The whole project of going ahead with that agreement was dropped there and then. The French, even years later under new leadership, never quite understood why all that happened. But it was all the working of the Atomic Energy Act.

In 1963, four years later, the NATO commander for the Atlantic was being changed so he went to all the countries to say goodbye. He called on General de Gaulle and told him that he was very happy that all the French units in the Atlantic were kept under their NATO earmark. General de Gaulle, some people believe, may not have realized that he hadn't removed all of them in 1959 and very promptly we got notice that the rest of the units were removed. So, the French Navy was no longer earmarked. But still all the other arrangements remained in place and, of course, by 1965...

Oh, very important...in 1962 the Algerian war wound up and General de Gaulle made speeches that people mostly didn't pay attention to; however it was one of my tasks to follow these things very closely. I must say that at that time we had a unique situation in which the Deputy Secretary of State, George Ball, seemed to have a special interest in French affairs.

Q: Well he was Monnet's man wasn't he?



BEIGEL: It's true he had a personal relationship with Monnet but he did have a very keen interest in France. He fully appreciated the significance of de Gaulle as President of France. When it was announced that de Gaulle was having a press conference, and this was always announced ahead of time with a great to-do, he was vitally interested in knowing that and knowing how many days it was since the last press conference. He wanted to know right away off the ticker what it is that de Gaulle said because these were important things covering a variety of subjects. This was no longer the case. This is part of the charm of being in WE during that period. In any case, we had hints that something was going to happen about France and NATO and noises began to be made about the command relationship. I remember doing a great research on the command relationship in World War II and getting help from a colleague who was working under the exchange program with Defense, a Foreign Service officer who was working in the Joint Staff. He got the Joint Staff historical section to prepare material for me on the command relationships in World War II involving French forces.

Q: At the very end of the war there were some real problems the French were following in their area...

BEIGEL: Well that is right, there were French forces in central and then in northern Italy and then at Belfort, and then eventually at Stuttgart. There were confrontations with de Gaulle at each place.

Q: They were following their own agenda, in a way.

BEIGEL: Yes. The French military did what de Gaulle wanted. He was the French commander-in-chief and not your allied super structure. There were certain problems which were not insuperable and were worked out. In any case, this was an element that was going on then. The time came when George Ball went over and saw de Gaulle and got some hints but still couldn't figure things out. Then in the winter of 1965- '66 we got an inkling of what was coming and it happened. We had to negotiate our way out of there. It was left that we then had in EUR, and had ever since 1950, an office dealing with NATO affairs across the board. One of the bureaucratic problems and questions that had arisen within EUR, back in the 1950s was how do the geographic offices and the desks relate to the NATO office in dealing with the NATO countries on military questions. In terms of the French relationship we never had problems, partly because I had been there from the outset and remained there and went out of my way to have good relations with the colleagues in the regional office. They had confidence that I knew what I was doing. When this drama came along it was really a country problem, but it had to be dealt with both in NATO and bilaterally, but of course getting out of France was in a sense a housekeeping question. All of the instructions originated at the WE level and would get the blessing of the Assistant Secretary or his deputy. We went through 1955, 1956, and then we had long interminable discussions with France about what would happen after that.



We did negotiate, strangely enough, continued use of the pipeline that the French had built across France from the Atlantic taking US aviation and other fuel into Germany. The French had built it and were operating it under contract to the Defense Department. They said well, we want that to continue. There were also what were called NATO pipelines the French had built up into Germany.

We had five airfields used by US fighter planes in eastern France, and other fields used by transports, lots of ammunition depots, and we had hospital facilities. Back 1964, during the Johnson-Goldwater campaign, the Pentagon wanted to deal with the continuing balance of payments deficit with Europe-things had turned around from the 1940s. (McNamara had earlier said to Kennedy that he would try to contribute a billion dollars a year to the reduction of the balance of payments deficit, by reducing net US military expenditures abroad without denigrating our missions abroad.) So one question was to go to all the principal countries in Western Europe in the summer of 1964 with survey teams. The team I was associated with was headed by a Joint Staff officer who picked service officers from real estate offices in the European Commands to form a small team. They invited the State Department to send an observer and counselor with each team and go around and visit all the military facilities-one team per country. I spent six weeks in the fall of 1964 visiting all of our facilities in France. In our final report I was asked to write the section on our relations with the French and could say honestly that everything we wanted from the French from 1950 on, although lots of hemming and hawing and problems on the French side, but eventually all of our requirements were fulfilled; and it was only a year and a half later that General de Gaulle said there would no longer be any foreign forces or installations in France.

Q: When you got this handwritten letter in WE, what was the response for there is basically two ways of doing it-one was sticking it to them the dirty bastards or two, lets take the long view.

BEIGEL: I might say that a lot of people have forgotten but Foster Dulles once gave a very important speech, which he then put into a Foreign Affairs article, as Secretary of State saying we have bases available to us around the world, but we only operate with the consent of the host governments. I think that philosophy remained. There have been a lot of people who try to strong-arm governments in more recent years, but that wasn't the attitude in the 50s and 60s. When de Gaulle said that's it, there wasn't any doubt about that. The only national forces in France were ourselves and the Canadians. The Canadians had some facilities in France. The NATO military headquarters were also in France. One of Mr. Spaak's contributions...

Q: That was Paul Henri Spaak of Belgium...



BEIGEL: Was to get his government, which reluctantly went along, to offer to receive the NATO Headquarters in Brussels. That move was made. We had in anticipation of something going to happen, the Joint Staff and European commands had already made vast studies about relocation of our facilities. Also our military supply concepts were changing and if they had to do it over again they wouldn't have built the French line of communications the way it then existed. When we were invited to leave, the government agreed to that and preparations were made. We negotiated with the French the terms and we got out in two years (instead of one) in a very orderly way. I think de Gaulle once said to Bohlen that he was very pleased that we had been as cooperative about fulfilling what he wanted to take place. But we recognized French sovereignty fully.

Date: April 26, 1990 Interviewer: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Q: I would like to start off with going back to a period we didn't cover too much. Could you talk a little about McCarthyism and your view of how it affected, or did it have much of a effect when you were with...

BEIGEL: As far as I was concerned it had no effect whatsoever.

Q: But you see any ramifications within the European Bureau about this...

BEIGEL: Of course McCarthyism is a misnomer because it all began under Truman who preceded McCarthy. The security program instituted by Truman, I guess did a lot of weeding out of people and I guess it was accentuated during the period after 1950. With the arrival of Scott McLeod in the Department it was further accentuated. This was only something I read about in the papers.

Q: You didn't feel any pervasive looking over one's shoulder?

BEIGEL: Oh, no.

Q: All right, lets talk about moving on as we were talking and I wanted to ask at this point your view of dealing with France, NATO and France's colonial world because we had what some times was referred to as the Battle of Algeria in which the African Bureau and also the Asian Bureau were concerned about the decolonization process at the same time we were concerned about France's role in support of NATO.



BEIGEL: Decolonization was the major historic period in our relations with the Western European countries. Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Portugal and even Spain were in this period and we had accommodated ourselves to it. We were not the driving force. A lot of people may have had strong feelings about it. It was most pertinent in two areas as far as I was concerned, in North Africa and then in Southeast Asia. In North Africa the serious problems arose only about 1954, first in Tunisia and then quite rapidly jumped to Algeria. I guess it was November '54 when the outbreak really began. The intifada, we didn't know that word in those days.

Q: I might say the intifada refers in 1990 terms to an uprising of Palestinians within Israel's occupied areas.

BEIGEL: Yes, but this was the old nationalist movement which had been long-established in Algeria and the Front for National Liberation, FLN, emerged. There were all kinds of currents before they organized themselves. This was relevant to us because of military implications. The French had two divisions that were earmarked to NATO that were stationed in North Africa. The rest of their army was in France and Germany. Between 1954 and 1956 they drew down their forces on the continent in order to divert them to North Africa and they had a major order of battle in Algeria by 1956. During this period they would reiterate to us and to the other NATO countries, periodically, that this was a temporary diversion of their forces to secure the northern departments of Algeria which were, constitutionally speaking, part of the French Republic. This was accepted as a de facto situation. We, in fact, gave certain assistance to the French of a very special kind such as in helicopters. Helicopters were not such a common item in our armed forces and on production lines in our country certain waivers were arranged so that the French could take early delivery on helicopters. They in turn took certain special groups of our military as observers to see how they employed these helicopters. We may have learned certain things from them that we later applied in Vietnam. The war in Vietnam, of course, was going on and when the trouble started in Tunisia there were...

Q: 1954...

BEIGEL: Maybe in 1953. In any event, the French had a unit in Tunisia that they had planned to send out to Indochina. I guess it was in 1954, because then the trouble began and the unit was never sent. Of course the climax was taking place in Indochina because Dien Bien Phu was in the spring of 1954 and the Geneva Conference was the summer of 1954. So in a manner of speaking, the French went from one colonial war into another. There were many people in the French military service who were continuously engaged in active operations in one part of the world or another. In Indochina, I think, the rule was that conscripts were not sent, but they were sent to North Africa.



In terms of the political situation, our colleagues in those days in the North African office, people like John Utter, John Bovey, Bill Porter, were people with strong French backgrounds who had served, or would serve in France and other French-speaking countries. Bill Porter was a very level-headed person, was, perhaps in the long run, the most helpful because while the Nationalists considered he was sympathetic to their interests, he was the one who could tell them when to behave and would moderate their behavior, particularly in New York. This was, in retrospect, a real contribution to the orderly development of the whole situation vis-a-vis the French and taking into account the realities of what was going on in Algeria. There was a minimum of fuss between our part of the State Department and the North African area. It was one of cooperation and of understanding of what was happening. The declared policy was that this was a French problem that they had to resolve and we were not intervening. I remember when Dillon made a number of speeches, as ambassador to France, and speeches were written back here by the Administration, emphasizing this hands-off policy-not telling the French how to resolve this issue. And it resolved itself. First with the crisis in Paris in 1958, which led to the return of General de Gaulle to power. He successfully deceived his followers into believing that he was going to go all-out to maintain French presence in Algeria, which was not his intention.

Therefore secret negotiations took place, took about 2 or 3 years. He had a series of referenda knowing that the French public would support him because they confused his personality with the issue of the referendum and always gave him their support. So, he could maintain that he was following French public opinion. Then there was a transfer of French colonial population from Algeria to France, a certain amount of movement from Morocco to France. I have thought of it in these days in terms of the "colon" (the French word for colonist). The colon, also known as the black feet (the pied-noir). I have noticed in the French press they used the expression in Lithuania that the Soviet colon who went there right after the war and had been there 40 years was referred to as the "pied rouge." Although their historical situations are different there are certain similarities in the psychological situation of the people themselves.

Q: In our terms we would have called them carpetbaggers.

BEIGEL: Well, carpetbaggers, I guess, were in this country people who went down in the very short run in just a period of years after the Civil War.

Q: But those who stayed were still called carpetbaggers many generations later.

BEIGEL: Well, the French hadn't been there all that long but had been there a number of generations. I guess if we looked at the population figures the French piled into Algeria after 1900. I have never looked at those figures.



It was inevitable that the economic situation would deteriorate once the colonies left and it did. Algeria has never gotten over it. The French managed to develop those cities which would not have developed the way they did. A great commercial port in Algiers, Oran, Casablanca, the French brought that contribution to them. It was I thought rather a peaceful situation in the State Department. We had some special episodes with the French. They managed to bomb along the frontier between Tunisia and Algeria which was a route for arms to be infiltrated to the local nationalists. The French had put up barbed wire but it didn't stop so they decided to do some bombing along the frontier and managed to destroy a school house while in session. There was great furor. Senator Humphrey and other bleeding hearts would make long speeches on these occasions. We had to give stiff notes to the French because as it turned out the French had used both aircraft and ordnance of UK and US origin in this whole operation. We considered this a misuse of materiel provided to the French for the NATO forces...

Q: But we knew bloody well that they were going to use it for this didn't we? If we had observers...

BEIGEL: No, we didn't have observers.

Q: But we were sending helicopters, giving them special...

BEIGEL: Oh, those were just some special operations. No, the French politicians in Paris were as surprised by the raid as were the politicians here since in such circumstances the local military engages in plans on its own frequently.

The climax came in 1958 when we and the UK jointly offered our good offices, this may have been as a consequence of the bombing and what followed, between Tunisia and the French. The French had important naval and other military facilities in Tunisia that the Tunisians were agitating about. The French resented all this gratuitous interference on our part. This was another contribution to the build-up of the situation that climaxed in Algiers in May 1958 with a kind of revolt of the army high command which was resolved by the political transformation in Paris and the return of de Gaulle.

Q: Going back a bit, in '54 and all how were you and others looking at the colonial situation of these powers? Did you see that France and the other countries were going to be able to hold on to this at that time?



BEIGEL: Well, if people thought about it at all they could see that this was going to be a very difficult situation. By 1956 the French protectorates in Tunisia and Morocco were coming to an end. The political situation being different in Algeria, the French thought they could pacify and hold on to what they had there. That turned out to be historically incorrect. Things, in fact, got worse. There was a lot of terrorist bombing in Algiers, for example. There was a need to pacify the city of Algiers. This was actually done by 1958, 1959. I went there in the spring of 1960, the negotiations were still proceeding, the secret talks that were sort of secret, no one knew really what was going on. It was somewhat like what we were doing with the Vietnamese in Paris for a number of years. The public wasn't really informed about the contact what was going on. I can recall in the spring of 1960 that the city of Algiers was pacified. We flew down into the desert to look at the oil wells. Meanwhile, while all this was going on, down in the Sahara the French were exploring for oil and finding it, and building pipelines, building macadam road down to take supplies. This was extraordinary, the French had developed an additional economic interest in Algeria that hadn't existed in 1954. I think it is fair to say people simply adjusted to the situation. It did not come as a great surprise.

Meanwhile in 1956, 1957, 1958, the French were doing things in tropical Africa, winding up their colonial regimes. I guess 1958 must have been the big year for independence to be declared throughout tropical Africa. The French pioneered this so that it had a very serious impact on the Belgians in the Congo. What was happening in French Africa around the Congo is what led to the independence of the Belgian Congo. This in turn had an impact, by 1960, 1961 in Angola. The colonial war began then in Angola. I can remember reading interrogations or testimonies given by missionaries. One could see how the pattern developed. How the word got from one tribe to another despite language differences. In the French area of tropical Africa this really began, in that period, while they were still fighting to pacify Algeria...

Q: How did this speech, I can't recall the date, but everyone talks about the Speech Senator Kennedy made on the floor concerning support of Algeria. How was this viewed from within the EUR Bureau?

BEIGEL: Oh well, I think in the EUR Bureau, and within the Administration, certain materials were prepared at the request of Senator Saltonstall, the senior senator from Massachusetts at that time. I think it was Saltonstall who may have gotten up and made a counter-speech to the speech of the junior senator from Massachusetts. Saltonstall presented the Administration's line.

Q: Which was...



BEIGEL: Which was not Senator Kennedy's line which I would guess was that the French must wake up and grant immediate independence to the Northern Departments of Algeria, etc., etc. I can't remember what year that would have been-1956 or 1957, somewhere in there. The French effort, which was a major effort, probably did not compare in its lethal effect to what we later were to do in Vietnam because the French simply did not have the kind of firepower deployed. They had a lot of units down there but it was small unit operations. I don't think they used the kind of bombing and artillery, and napalm that we used in Vietnam. We really beat up the Vietnam jungle much more than the French did. The helicopter, I might say, was a special thing because in the mountainous areas in Algeria, one way of living there was in caves and people would go into caves to seek refuge from French army units that were crawling around the mountains. They invented the gunship approach of flying the helicopter and being able to shoot into the caves with automatic weapons. Of course, none of that resolved the situation. The Third World warfare that Bobby Kennedy was later to be a great proponent of was all a failure.

Q: Yes, the special forces and all...

BEIGEL: I think that continues to be a failure around the world wherever we employ it. But we continue to employ it. It is almost as if our professional forces need to be employed or they may wither on the vine in terms of appropriations and otherwise. This is a perverse aspect. It is frequently the case that a country's intentions are modified in accordance with its capabilities. When it is often said that the important thing about a power is to look at its intentions, not its capabilities, I think more people are discovering that that is false. At the time I recall wondering if the great build-up of our helicopter force when the Kennedy Administration came into office, McNamara came into office, great orders were pushed, we developed capabilities that we would then eventually employ in Vietnam. If we didn't have all that equipment, including the build-up of Navy sealift, if we didn't have that we wouldn't have engaged as extensively as we did in Vietnam. So the French were confronted with a similar situation. They engaged to the extent of their capabilities. Their intentions were beyond their capabilities.

Q: I wonder if we could go back to 1958 when de Gaulle came into power. This was not the revolt of the generals; that came a little later didn't it?

BEIGEL: Well that is right. The revolt of the generals was a more localized affair, just in Algiers, in the spring of 1961. It was soon brought under control by loyal generals.

Q: But how did we view the 1958 situation with de Gaulle coming in? What was being talked about in EUR at that time? Did we see de Gaulle coming back, did we feel it was a good thing or not? How did we feel?



BEIGEL: I suppose the fairest thing to say is that we were trying to keep up with what was probably happening as the rest of the world was. We didn't have any pipeline inside, that I can recall, the French Government or the Gaullist movement, we were strictly outside watching what was happening. An embassy has good contacts, of course, to learn what is happening, but it was seen that this was a situation as is always the case in a country like France that was going to be resolved by the French in some way. The really significant aspect of the developing political situation in a major western European country that foreign governments have any relation to is the international financial position of that country. If that country has a run on its currency, or wants to close its international markets, then other countries are concerned. There was, on a later occasion, in 1968, which was a strictly domestic development in France when the French to their surprise ended up with a general strike and their currency was under great pressure; at that time, for example, the Johnson Administration told the French Government that if they needed some standby credit to bolster their currency that we were prepared to get to that. While that helps bolster the self-confidence of a government that is under domestic pressure it's only in ways like that that other governments can really have any great impact in a country like France.

Q: Most of the time we are there reporting but try to stay out of the cross fire.

BEIGEL: We are concerned about the safety of our nationals that are in the country. If anything is happening in the country that would make it less safe for them. Of course, before 1958 came along that was not really the case. This was a quick couple of weeks, but the fuss was mostly in the churning around in the parliamentary scene, the political scene. It did not involve violence, mobilization, what have you. There was a case in 1961, the so-called revolt of the generals when we learned later there were in fact some units down at Pau; in the southwest, for example, where there was an airborne training center. There were some air force generals who were thinking about the possible mobilization of those forces. They would take paratroops up, drop them on the airports in Paris and other key places. That was at a time when they looked ludicrous at first. The then Prime Minister was calling on the public to get their hunting rifles and go out to the airport, or drive their trucks on the runways, or what have you. But clearly the French domestic intelligence service, the police intelligence service, had wind of all these things going on. The French have a very good civil, domestic intelligence service which works closely with their security service, which is the equivalent of our FBI.



EUR was bracing for what would happen. Our mission chief or DCM in Paris had talked with General de Gaulle every so often, as a kind of courtesy call. One keeps a benign contact with a person like that who is extensively out in the political desert, but you never know and this, of course, was an example when the person crossed the desert and came back into power. And into much more power than he had immediately after the war in 1945. The important thing about de Gaulle was knowing him. The leadership here which had experience since the Second World War was in office and knew that de Gaulle was a difficult person to deal with and behaved accordingly. The Secretary of State, within a month or so after de Gaulle returned to power, was making a visit to see him, an official visit. He offered certain kinds of special cooperation to him in the military field, which I think we discussed before, which ended up collapsing partly because General de Gaulle gave the first indications, which were largely not appreciated, exactly what it was leading up to in this country, but were sufficient to put cold water on the development of some special cooperation that really called for his full participation in the NATO arrangements and planning. As he began to withdraw from that the response here recognized that, and certain things that could have happened did not happen. There was public confusion about all this, but the Administrations in office were quite conscious of what they were doing and why, even though they did not always articulate this. But this is always the case, even today the press will tell us our real policy is this but the Administration is not articulating it very well and sometimes for deliberate political reasons. That was the case with France during the whole Gaullist period.

Q: It seems that even looking back on history, and I would appreciate your point of view, that in foreign relations, particularly, there has been the impression in the United States that in crisis France is there, but in other times they play kind of the spoiler as far as we are concerned. Is there anything to this or....

BEIGEL: When you talk about crisis, they are crisis in our eyes.

Q: Well, I'm thinking of the Cuban missile crisis.



BEIGEL: So we take the Cuban missile crisis. This was a bilateral confrontation between ourselves and the Soviets. The resolution of that crisis came about with the mobilization of our conventional armed forces, air force, army and navy, to close in on Cuba. I think the Soviets were aware of this. Any military attaché½ in Washington who was paying attention was probably aware of what was happening, although on much of public opinion here the conventional mobilization was lost. In any event, it was the beginning of a naval blockade, the quarantine as it was called. And what would proceed from that with our conventional forces I believe convinced the Soviets that the show was over. People like Dean Rusk talked about nuclear confrontation which people like General Taylor, who was in a very critical position as military advisor to the President at that time, has since written was nonsense. It struck me as nonsense, but Dean Rusk used to make lots of nonsense about a lot of things. In any case, a belief that it was such a confrontation was mythology, but it did get around. This was enough to scare a lot of Europeans. After all if we had a confrontation with the Soviets and they were engaged in a defense treaty relationship with us where would that leave them. Well, they only had to think about that and not for very long as it was all over in a few weeks. There was then the famous episode which was subsequently written up in which Dean Acheson was mobilized to...

Q: This was after he was out of office.

BEIGEL: Oh, he was out of office, yes. He was just taken on by Kennedy as a special emissary. He was a lawyer on 15th street then. He was sent as a special emissary with some types from Langley, Virginia, with the aerial photographs to show them to General de Gaulle who, the story is, after looking at the photographs through the stereoscopic devices that would give him a three-dimensional affect, said, "Tell your President we are with you." One could say to himself, what the hell does that mean? I don't know that it meant anything in particular. It was a nice gesture, a nice statement.

That was in October 1962. It is interesting that in early 1963 when he was reminded that part of the French fleet was still earmarked for NATO commitment in wartime, de Gaulle immediately took steps to withdraw that paper commitment. He also in 1962, before the Cuban missile crisis, was already redeploying French forces from Algeria, but we already knew that he had made clear internally that they were not going back to Germany from whence they had been withdrawn. And from speeches that he made, to which people didn't pay much attention here, it was quite apparent that he didn't have any intention of rebuilding the French ground and air commitment to NATO. Once he had redeployed French forces from Algeria he was going to demobilize a lot of those forces, which he did.



When was the next crisis? We had already had some crisis before Kennedy came into office. There was the crises back in 1958 which I have talked about before, in the Far East and in the Middle East, which General de Gaulle told us he was very concerned about in terms of their implications for French security and invoking our security alliances with France to get them involved in something they were not really involved in. This just added, I thought, to de Gaulle's appreciation along those lines. And despite the statement that he made to Acheson, I don't think that fit into de Gaulle's pattern of thinking. The crisis in Czechoslovakia was in August 1968. At that time, of course, we made very clear, mostly by Dean Rusk talking on background so that public opinion didn't know who was talking, but he made quite clear to the press, in some extraordinary background press conferences, that we were not going to do anything about the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. That was on their side of the line. The NATO treaty was to defend NATO Europe. The President then came out and made some statements that were not written in the State Department, but were written by his Security Counselor, Mr. Rostow, a kind of warning to the Soviet Union that they should not pull a similar operation in Yugoslavia. There was a feeling then, a concern that that might happen. [I can recall looking up the minutes of the summit meetings between Chamberlain and Daladier, the summer of 1938, all of which were subsequently published. Reading the minutes of the French/British summits were rather interesting. It was apparent that Chamberlain did the same thing in 1938 as Johnson did in 1968. He made some statements warning Hitler not to move into other countries at that moment.] Well, that didn't turn out to be a Soviet plan. But at that time the French reaction-the French reaction?...Perhaps our relationship with General de Gaulle was sufficiently cool by then. For example, on the night of the operation...

Q: This was the invasion of Czechoslovakia?

BEIGEL: In August 20, 1968, the American Ambassador in London was invited to come to a cabinet meeting at Downing Street, which to my mind epitomized what was called the special relationship. The first thing the British cabinet thought of was consulting with the United States. That is a measure of whether or not you have a special relationship. Now, what was the reaction in Paris? None whatsoever. Whatever the French were saying to each other inside their own government that night they were not talking to us. The Chargé in Bonn was invited to come around, if not to a German cabinet meeting, to the Chancellor's office. We were mobilized back here within the State Department that night...



The French reaction led to the what I would describe as a public confrontation. It was a personal thing with General de Gaulle who was of course at that time on vacation at his estate in eastern France. He deliberately called for a special French cabinet meeting to take place in Paris soon thereafter. The purpose of this, which became apparent after the fact, was so that he could issue a long communique that he undoubtedly wrote himself saying well, what do you expect as the consequence of the Yalta Agreement the Americans made with the Russians. This was another manifestation of General de Gaulle's perverse interpretation of what the Yalta Agreement was all about.

Q: Was it perverse of the Yalta Agreement or perverse from at least our point of view of wanting to make France something special. One couldn't do much about the Soviet Union but he could certainly make sure that he was staking out...

BEIGEL: I don't know.

Q: But did you have this impression?

BEIGEL: One never knows what his motivations were unless he told somebody, wrote them down himself, and this never happened. His whole attitude about the Yalta Agreement, which was a very simple declaration on liberated Europe that called freely-elected governments in all the liberated countries in Europe. It is obvious that Stalin had no intentions of abiding by any such undertaking and that our side may have been naively idealistic in promoting such a declaration and making something of it. In any event that's all the Yalta Agreement that was germane to the Czechoslovakia situation called for. Self-government in Czechoslovakia as a liberated country. The Russians didn't have any intention of following that. So this had nothing to do with the Yalta Agreement. Nonetheless, General de Gaulle put out this great blast directed at the Americans as being responsible at Yalta for what was happening in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. It so happened that a participant at the conference at Yalta, and former American Ambassador in France, was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs for a year or so before he retired, namely Chip Bohlen. Dean Rusk asked Bohlen to prepare a counter-blast that was issued as a statement by the US Government recalling what the Yalta Agreement was about, what the declaration was about. I can remember one afternoon, Bohlen's secretary frantically calling down to me, as a source of documentation over the years, please bring the Yalta Agreement to Mr. Bohlen's office immediately. I had to go down to get it out of the library and take it up. He figured I had all of this right at my finger tips.



The whole issue of spheres of influence, as if they had been agreed upon at Yalta, etc. which was all mythology, was all knocked down in this public blast. Although the leading paper in Paris had a two-page spread, by its foreign editor, explaining why de Gaulle was wrong about this and the Americans were right, it didn't affect most French politicians' thinking. Nor has it in the 20 years since then. This mythology that de Gaulle implanted is really set in the French political mind, believe it or not. It was in this country as well because it did become an article of faith to the GOP that this was another nefarious action by Franklin Roosevelt; and that did not stop being a Republic Party position until, for some curious reason, Ronald Reagan made a public statement that it was all wrong.

In any case later that year it was decided that the NATO Foreign Ministers should meet at the United Nations. This was probably in October, two months after the Czech affair. The French Foreign Minister, Mr. Debr̃, came (this was a closed session and in effect a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in New York) and characterized the invasion, and I think he also did so publicly, as just an accident on the highway of history. At one time General de Gaulle even made reference to nefarious broadcast by German radio stations that may have encouraged the Czechs in their Prague Spring approach to life. The Czechs needed no encouragement from foreign radios. This gave the flavor of how de Gaulle approached this. Of course, the real significance of all of this was that it brought down, like a house of cards, an endeavor that de Gaulle had undertaken as part of his own eastern policy, if you want to call it that. He had made visits to Poland and the Soviet Union and there was apprehension here as to what this would lead to. People like the Alsops, Joe Alsop in his column, even wondered if de Gaulle intended to reverse his alliances. Nothing like that happened, but it indicates how anxious some people were as to what de Gaulle had up his sleeve. As a matter of fact he was trying to create a new atmosphere with Moscow. France would play a role of bridging East-West differences, etc. All this collapsed with the invasion of Czechoslovakia. De Gaulle never publicly admitted it and never got to write about it in his second series of memoirs which ended just after the first volume was completed-he died with only the beginning of the second volume. That event in the fall of 1968 along with what had happened in the spring of 1968 domestically, I think, was very discouraging to de Gaulle. There is some reason to believe that in the spring of 1969, when he called for another referendum on the reformation of the French Senate and local government, he realized that he was going to lose that referendum. When he did he promptly announced his retirement from public life. He resigned as President. I believe that these events of 1968 he may have found very discouraging both domestically and for his foreign policy. So this was the real effect of those events even though in terms of French-American relations they certainly stirred up a lot of dust.

Q: Did you have the feeling that we were trying to mend fences with France and that de Gaulle didn't want those fences mended for his own personal or political reasons?



BEIGEL: No, I think he was convinced of his own policies and what he was doing. The fence-mending part refers to a number of people in this government, and we are now talking about the end of 1968. But from the period of 1964 on, when Lyndon Johnson succeeded to the Presidency (at the end of 1963 he gave an anonymous interview to a columnist of the Washington Evening Star, who was well-known in Washington as being close to Johnson, about relations with de Gaulle). The attitude here was that General de Gaulle had pushed himself away from the table and whenever he wants to come back to the table we would be perfectly delighted to resume the relationship. But it was up to General de Gaulle. I consider that that was a very significant statement and characterized the entire Johnson Administration's relationship with de Gaulle. I don't think de Gaulle and Johnson saw each other at all except at a memorial service for Chancellor Adenauer.

Q: ...the Kennedy funeral.

BEIGEL: They met at the Kennedy funeral, but at that time, Johnson had been briefed that Kennedy had been arranging for de Gaulle to make a visit to the US possibly an informal visit to Hyannis Port and/or Palm Beach. It was ostensibly projected for the spring of 1964, so Johnson, knowing that, made some allusion to that and de Gaulle made it clear, not to the President, but before he left town he had the word passed that anything about a meeting would be arranged through the usual diplomatic channels. Well, that turned out to be a signal that de Gaulle had no intention of going through with a visit. It turned out that the only time that they did see each other was in Germany. It is interesting that a French satirical paper characterized that meeting in a cartoon showing a photograph of the two men standing at a table greeting each other; under the table the cartoon had them kicking each other in the shins. The French understood that that was the relationship, which was perfectly suitable to General de Gaulle who seemed to want to have an arms-length relationship.

He of course was heavily involved in Vietnam. He had already had his summit meeting with Kennedy in the spring of 1961 when he warned Kennedy that France had been through all this in Indochina and his only advice was: don't you go through it. Kennedy didn't pay any attention to that-Laos was the issue at that moment. Kennedy began building up the forces and I never knew what the full motivation was, whether there was any religious interest in the back of Kennedy's mind with the strong Catholic regime in Vietnam. Nothing was ever said about that or even suggested. We had this great military build-up in our capabilities that were quite suitable to use in that part of the world. When you have them you frequently use them. In any case, we got involved and General de Gaulle in fact, I think it was in 1966, went out to Phnom Penh and made a big speech which was interpreted as an attack on American interventionist policy in that part of the world. We weren't going to resolve this situation in that part of the world through military intervention, he kept telling us, and we kept not believing it until we convinced ourselves.



So there was that tension in our relationship which became increasingly polemical throughout the Johnson Administration, particularly after 1965. De Gaulle was watching this in Paris and not giving much support. There were Frenchmen involved in some of our negotiations, but that, I think, all came after Johnson and de Gaulle both left office.

Q: From your vantage point did you see a return to mending fences after the departure of de Gaulle between the United States and France?

BEIGEL: Well, when you mend fences you have to find which fences. Basic relationships between the two countries were in no way affected by these foreign policy differences. The basic economic relationship between the two countries, all the commercial, trade, travel relationships, were developing rapidly. There was a steady expansion in the economic relationship which is the fundamental relationship between the two countries. Then we had a very special and somewhat artificial situation, namely the military relationship. That was a relationship between governments. The public read about things in the newspapers. There were certain numbers of military personnel involved, but this was a very special thing. Of course as long as we had a presence in France, which went on until 1967, the French public in those parts of the country where we were implanted, were aware of our presence. But that again was a rather special thing affecting a limited part of the French population. It affected practically none of the American population except some thousands of troops who were present there. Otherwise when de Gaulle, for example, invited us to leave, well this became a public event, a media event. There was interest in Congress but for the vast part of public opinion there was little overall impact, although there was more reporting on France in the newspapers. Bohlen in his memories said this was certainly the most traumatic event in French-American diplomatic relations since the end of the war. Certainly the most traumatic event during the Johnson Administration and during Bohlen's tour in Paris which covered most of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. This was a very significant diplomatic event. But it was a diplomatic event at the government level.

When you talk about fence-mending there is the question of well, what about that military relationship? Well, that relationship was defined by the French; we weren't withdrawing anything. It was the French who were withdrawing. It was General de Gaulle, himself, who agreed very promptly to a publicly-known but classified agreement that he made through his chief of staff with the NATO military command, which was approved by the NATO governments. That is an agreement that for the last 23 years has, I guess you might say, governed French relationships with NATO under which all kinds of contingency planning takes place...

Q: It's basically a de Gaulle agreement with NATO which took immediate effect, we didn't have to wait for de Gaulle's...?



BEIGEL: That all happened right away. It was announced on the floor of the French parliament. The agreement wasn't revealed but it was announced that there was such an agreement and that has governed the French Government's approach ever since. The extent that you have contingency planning and exactly how it develops is up to each French Government to define, but the institutional framework was established then and has never changed. No French Government has ever contemplated the notion of simply restoring the paper commitment of their forces. All French Governments say well, you see all of these contingency arrangements come into affect only if the French Government agrees in the time of a crisis.

The historic fact is that participation by any NATO government in coalition warfare takes place only when that national government decides; there is nothing automatic about NATO going to war as a coalition of governments. The governments must all agree as national governments. That is the basic fallacy of all de Gaulle policy vis-a-vis NATO, in pretending that in some way the Supreme Commander, an American general, could order French forces into action contrary to the wishes of the French Government. I think it was General Lemnitzer, the Supreme Commander, who came back to a series of Congressional investigations, there were at least three separate Congressional investigations, in the spring of 1966, about the whole situation in NATO. He said at one of these hearings, "I cannot order a French soldier to cross the street without the concurrence of his own government."

There were some members of the French parliament who opposed de Gaulle's decision. There was a debate in the spring of 1966, in the French parliament, and a vote, but of course the opponents of this policy were in the minority and the subject has never been discussed since. One or two maverick generals have said or written that France made a mistake and ought to correct it, but nothing has ever come of it.

Q: But also there has been the underlying cooperation between joint military maneuvers, the whole thing, so that the structure is still there.

BEIGEL: That's right. In 1960 the first French nuclear device exploded over the Sahara desert. This had been a program which had been in effect some years before General de Gaulle returned to office. He simply reconfirmed that it should go on. The French began developing nuclear weapons all on their own. They began developing a bomber that would carry bombs, land-based missiles that could carry a nuclear warhead, and nuclear submarines. They were doing all of this on their own. When they had achieved their bombers (the French were superb in aeronautical design historically), we started talking about coordinating their nuclear force with allied, meaning US and UK, forces.



The French said no, after we develop our various generations of nuclear weapons we will think about it. And that continued to be their view during the Gaullist period, and after de Gaulle departed that continued to be the French view. Other than whatever contingency arrangements exist about the use of the French tactical nuclear weapons with allied weapons, mostly ours, as far as the bombers and missiles are concerned they are all on their own. This coordination to my knowledge never existed while I was in the Department.

There was concern here that if you have strategic weapons that you are going to fire you want to coordinate them with someone else who is firing them, but that's mostly a matter of convenience and economy and not having your own missile suddenly knocked down by someone else's missile exploding...

Well, I always considered all of this, which was looked on with utmost of importance in our own National Security Staff to be a great charade. Mr. McNamara, who had a lot to do with developing this, has only since he left office come around to this view himself. Heavens, he said, don't ever think you are going to use any of these weapons. This is all a deterrent. We haven't really gotten over that. That historic period in our military armament is winding down but all so slowly. With the French it is very curious because the French decided that they would develop their systems. The Gaullist party, headed by Mr. Chirac, was hell bent to increase the number of nuclear submarines they would build, far beyond the number they actually built. Mr. Chirac was of the school that thinks you must have a huge panoply of nuclear weapons. The Socialists, before they returned to office in 1981, after something like 23 years, didn't know much about what was going on and were rather anti all of this. They sorted themselves out and endorsed the nuclear weapons program and have contributed to its further development. They have developed multiple-warhead missiles for their submarines so that the actual number of vectors, as I call them, or warheads that they could employ is up in the hundreds, far greater in number than the British ever dreamed of having, even with their nuclear warheads that are coming along.

So the question arises: if the Americans and Soviets reduce nuclear weapons and restrain themselves, where do the British and French fit into that? President Mitterrand, has articulated a position on all this. He considers that we and the Soviets are involved in over-armament by far and that the two super- powers would have to vastly reduce the number of their arms before they would get anywhere down to the dimensions of where the French would seriously consider participating. I think the British have now elucidated a similar line. This is where we now stand.



You might ask whether there are disagreements and tensions as a consequences of all this. I don't think so. One of the very interesting things that we did in these so-called disarmament negotiations with the Soviets, was that when the Soviets talked about the French and British nuclear forces we took very explicit exception to their statements and said no way would what we were doing affect the British and French. And the British and French appreciated that position. In 1963 the French negotiated with Henry Kissinger a statement that was put out as a NATO Council statement recognizing that the British and French had their independent nuclear forces which contribute to the over-all NATO deterrent. That was a phrase which I think the French Foreign Minister invented but which we embraced. So the French were very grateful and have frequently referred to that phrase as the American acceptance, after many years, of the legitimacy and the valid contribution of the French nuclear forces to the over-all deterrent.

Of course Mitterrand has steadily said that French defense doctrine in Europe is one of strategic deterrence; that that is the salvation of French national security. He does not subscribe anymore than the French Government under de Gaulle did to what was developing then as the so-called graduated response of the NATO nuclear forces which was adopted as NATO doctrine. It had to be adopted unanimously and was only adopted after France withdrew from the integrated command and from those bodies that would adopt such doctrine. That doctrine, the current NATO nuclear doctrine, was adopted only in 1967 once the French withdrew. Mitterrand has said, and he said only a month ago, that in his view the NATO doctrine must change in the coming period. I foresee that we may have new tensions with France.

Q: Going back because we are looking at the historical record, what was your impression of the staffing of EUR as far as how worked. Often the bureaus are ranked and EUR almost always comes out as number one. Did you have any of this feeling as opposed to East Asia, Latin America, etc.?

BEIGEL: I think that some of the best people in the Foreign Service were interested in Europe and gravitated to the European Bureau. It was often believed in the European Bureau that the best officers in the Service were in European posts and once in a while there would be some indications that the White House or the Secretary of State felt that way. When some of the leading EUR lights were sent, for example I can think of several that I knew very well, who were sent to Latin America as Chiefs of Mission ostensibly to strengthen the ARA Bureau.



Whether all of this is a fair evaluation is hard to say, but there was this feeling that EUR had better people, they did their homework better, they had a greater interest in the problems in the area and their coming to grips with the problems, their mastering of their subjects. Of course in the Eastern European area there did develop an informal circuit, the Eastern European circuit, in which officers rotated between the Soviet Union, Eastern European capitals and those desks. That part of the European Bureau had really developed from the 30s, I believe, and went on during the war and certainly after the war.

It's true that there was an ARA circuit whose officers specializing in Spanish and Portuguese rotated between the ARA Bureau and posts in Central and South America. It was asserted, whether it was mythology or not, that those in the EUR area were of a "higher caliber," whatever that means. Many officers aspired to get EUR assignments. It is true that the standard of living in the Western civilization was at a different level, many of the Western European capitals were considered plush places to go and live in for several years, compared to many other parts of the world. That undoubtedly had a certain attraction particularly for new people coming into the Service just after the war. Certainly historically, looking back at the whole Oriental language specialty in the Foreign Service before World War II, it was a great specialization.

Q: Oh yes, Japanese, Chinese, etc...

BEIGEL: Just as it was in Latin America. In much of Africa and South Asia we only had consular representation. Those were all part of European empires until after World War II. The explosion of all the many states and other less developed countries where we were sending mission chiefs, with a full panoply of officers. That sounded like a phenomenon of the last 30 years now. But the EUR reputation I think developed during the inter-war period and during the first 20 years after the war. We got to the extreme that it was said that when Kissinger was Secretary of State he had the so-called GLOP, Global Outlook Program. I don't know to what extent that really dissipated the special talent that EUR could draw upon.

Q: I suspect it had very little because once he left things went back to normal.



BEIGEL: I must say that in Western European Affairs on the French Desk, for example, there was a great tradition that certainly existed from the pre-war, through the war, post-war period. Particularly the post-war period since it couldn't be applied during the war. The French desk and positions within the Western European Office were occupied by people who had gone to those posts and were usually political officers at those posts and were at a grade level that would match the grades assigned to the desk job. A deliberate effort was made to recruit people, to watch people, pick out some of the best people and bring them back to the desk so that the people brought back, for one thing all had the language, usually from service in the field. They didn't go to FSI to learn French. That is no longer the case. In that sense there has been a devaluation, if you can call it that, or a denaturing of that aspect of recruiting people to have a stronger performance at the desk level. That has gone hand in hand with the downgrading of the importance of the desk officer and the role that he is allowed to play in the whole formulation and implementation of policy. Over the years people at the desk level played a much more important role in the implementation of policy. Your policy comes from the President and Secretary, but within a broad policy all kinds of things are decided constantly. The strength of the State Department vis-a-vis all the other agencies was that the desk officer was a very powerful person who was in a position of saying what the State Department position was on any number of problems that came up that were not of astronomic importance, but were of importance to other agencies. We could participate in inter-agency meetings and make State Department policy decisions, but the other participants would have to go back to their superiors.

Q: It's a shame, I notice we have run out of your time. I really appreciate this. It has been a lot of fun.

End of interview